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Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-05 IGA-02

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R 201009Z FEB 76
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8811
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK TH

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 3889

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, MARR, MILI, TH
SUBJ: U.S. MILITARY IN THAILAND: BACKGROUND AND COMMENT
ON NATION STORY AND EDITORIAL

REF: BANGKOK 3729

1. RELIABLE NEWS SOURCE TOLD US THAT THE NATION EDITOR SUTHICHAI YOON SPENT FOUR HOURS WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY UNDER SECRETARY ANAN PANYARACHUN GATHERING MATERIAL THAT APPEARED IN ARTICLE REPORTED REFTEL.

2. SOURCE SAID ANAN'S MAJOR OBJECTIVE SEEMED TO BE TO CREATE AN APPEARANCE OF CONFLICT IN U.S.-THAI DISCUSSION CONCERNING RESIDUAL AND FEB 4 MEETING AT WHICH THAI DELIVERED PRINCIPLES. HE ADDED THAT ANAN, WHO IS OUT OF TOWN, HAD DELEGATED TO WORAPHUT CHAIYANAM, CHIEF, AMERICA DIVISION, MFA, THE EFFORT TO KEEP STORY SIMMERING IN PUBLIC UNTIL U.S. REPLIES TO THAI "DEMANDS."

3. AMERICAN NEWSMAN TOLD US THAT IN CONVERSATION YESTERDAY, FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN NITSAI
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WETCHACHIWA DESCRIBED FEB. 4 MEETING. AMERICANS,

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HE SAID, PUT FORWARD WHAT THEY WANT TO KEEP IN THAILAND -- EMPHASIZING THAT IT WAS U.S. WHO WANTED CERTAIN FUNCTIONS TO REMAIN HERE -- AND THAT THAI COUNTERED WITH TOUGH PROPOSALS WHICH U.S. MUST MEET BEFORE RTG WILL CONSIDER ALLOWING THOSE DESIRED FUNCTIONS TO REMAIN. UP TO NOW, NITSAI HAS STAYED AWAY FROM THIS DEVELOPING STORY. INITIALLY, HE WAS RELUCTANT TO TALK WITH THE AMERICAN NEWSMAN, WHO SOUGHT OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION FROM RTG THAT THE NATION ARTICLE IN REFTEL WAS CORRECT. REPORTEDLY, NITSAI TOLD NEWSMAN THAT HE COULD NOT CONFIRM STORY BUT "WOULD CHECK AROUND" THE MINISTRY TO SEE IF IT WERE TRUE. LATER, HE CALLED NEWSMAN AND VOLUNTEERED WHAT REPORTER SAID WAS "HARSH VERSION."

4. CLEARLY, ANAN IS INITIATOR OF PERSISTENT EFFORT TO SURFACE IN LOCAL PRESS SELF-SERVING VERSION OF FEB. 4 MEETING AND, THROUGH WORAPHUT, HAS SPREAD THAT EFFORT TO U.S. NEWSMEN. ANAN AND WORAPHUT MADE POINTS SIMILAR TO NATION STORY WITH CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR AND NEW YORK TIMES.

5. WE WISH IN PARTICULAR TO FLAG ONE ASPECT OF THE CONTENT OF THE NEWS STORY AND EDITORIAL INSPIRED BY ANAN: THEY BOTH CARRIED A STRONG IMPLICATION THAT THE U.S. IS DRAGGING ITS FEET ABOUT PROVIDING INFORMATION TO THE THAI AND RESPONDING TO THEIR PROPOSALS, PARTICULARLY ON THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES. THIS, OF COURSE, REPRESENTS A DISTORTION OF WHAT WE HAVE BEEN SAYING AND DOING HERE, BUT WE WANT TO AVOID GIVING IT ANY COLOR OF ACCURACY. IT THEREFORE BECOMES IMPORTANT THAT WE PROMPTLY RECEIVE THE DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS AS TO HOW WE SHOULD REPLY TO THE THAI ON THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES.
WHITEHOUSE

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